

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: LKA31531
Country: Sri Lanka
Date: 28 March 2007

Keywords: Sri Lanka – UNP – PA – Political violence

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. What is the current position of the UNP?**
- 2. Would a Provincial Organizer of the UNP have to have a position within the party?**
- 3. What evidence is there of recent violence between the PA (a component of the UPFA) and the UNP?**

RESPONSE

1. What is the current position of the UNP?

With the defection of 20 of its parliamentary members to the government party (the United People's Freedom Alliance led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party) in January 2007, the United National Party (UNP) faces a grim future although it could be a blessing as it provides an opportunity to cleanse the party of "driftwood" and "garbage". Earlier in 2005, it had suffered a blow when five high profile UNP MPs defected to the government ('Political Risk Alert – Rajapakse Strengthened, But Big Challenges Remain' 2007, *Emerging Markets Daily News*. 29 January – Attachment 1; 'Sri Lanka govt wins majority as opposition MPs defect' 2007, Reuters, 28 January – Attachment 2; 'Rebels 2007: The fallout of political pole-vaulting' 2007, *Lanka Page*, 7 February <http://lankapage.wordpress.com/2007/02/07/rebels-2007-the-fallout-of-political-pole-vaulting/> – Accessed 28 March 2007 – Attachment 3; 'Who will fare well?' 2007, *The Nation*, 28 January <http://www.nation.lk/2007/01/28/inter.htm> – Accessed 28 March 2007 – Attachment 4).

The UNP became the first opposition party having lost the 2004 parliamentary elections after a 17 year rule. Now with the defections, the government party can command a basic majority of 113 seats in the 225 member parliament weakening further the position of the first opposition party although some of the defectors are said to retain the UNP membership. ('Political Risk Alert – Rajapakse Strengthened, But Big Challenges Remain' 2007, *Emerging Markets Daily News*. 29 January – Attachment 1; 'Election 2004: Seats – Parliament Composition' (undated), Sri Lanka Election Commission <http://archive.srilankanelections.com/seatsofar.htm> – Accessed 27 March 2007 – Attachment 5; 'Tissa Attanayake vows disciplinary actions against UNP

dissidents who joined Sri Lanka's ruling party led by Mahinda Rajapaksa' 2007, *Asian Tribune*, 29 January <http://www.asiantribune.com/index.php?q=node/4328> – Accessed 27 March 2007 – Attachment 6).

In the 2004 election, the party secured 82 seats having obtained 37.83% of votes while the UPFA won 105 seats with 45.60% of votes ('Election 2004: Seats – Parliament Composition' (undated), Sri Lanka Election Commission <http://archive.srilankanelections.com/seatsofar.htm> – Accessed 27 March 2007 - Attachment 5; 'View Graphical Representation: General Elections 2004' (undated), Sri Lanka Election Commission <http://archive.srilankanelections.com/allcumu2004.htm> – Accessed 27 March 2007 - Attachment 7 – It provides full details of the votes secured by each party that contested the elections).

For historical background of the UNP, see

UK Home Office 2005, *Sri Lanka Country Assessment*, September – 'Political Organizations' – Annex B – 'United National Party (UNP)' – Attachment 8;

'UNP (United National Party)' 2007, *Sri Lankan News & Discussions* <http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/profiles/unp.jsp> – Accessed 28 March 2007 – Attachment 9).

2. Would a Provincial Organizer of the UNP have to have a position within the party?

It appears that Provincial Organizers of the UNP are appointed from its members ('UNP to re-appoint the provincial organizers' 2006, *The Truth*, 12 July http://www.lankatruth.com/full_story/2006/july/12/20060712_8.htm – Accessed 28 March 2007 – Attachment 10). However, no definitive information has been sighted that they have to have a position within the party. .

3. What evidence is there of recent violence between the PA (a component of the UPFA) and the UNP?

While a search through the sources consulted has failed to unearth any recent report of violence between the PA and the UNP, two 1999 reports refer respectively to alleged attack on PA office by an UNP MP and to violence between them in the course of electioneering in the North Western Provincial Council elections. They are entitled 'Alleged attack on PA office -Warrants issued on UNP MP and former Mayor' 1999, *Daily News*, January and 'More and more violence in NWP – PA, UNP accuse each other' 1999; *The Island*, January ('News Headlines: January 1999' 1999, *Inform Sri Lanka Information Monitor*, pp.1-5, March – Attachment 11).

Although it is not about violence between the PA and the UNP, a report comments on the UPFA supporters preventing the UNP voters from entering the polling stations in the Kandy District in the course of the local government elections in May 2006 ('Media Communiqué on Election-related Violence – Local Government Elections – May 2006' 2006, Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV), 20 May http://www.cpalanka.org/cmev_20th_May_2006_2nd_Release.html – Accessed 28 March 2007 – Attachment 12).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Government Information & Reports

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

United Nations (UN)

Non-Government Organisations

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org>

Freedom House website <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

International News & Politics

BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

Region Specific Links

Asian Centre for Human Rights <http://www.achrweb.org>

Search Engines

Copernic <http://www.copernic.com/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFORMATION (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. 'Political Risk Alert – Rajapakse Strengthened, But Big Challenges Remain' 2007, *Emerging Markets Daily News*. 29 January. (FACTIVA)
2. 'Sri Lanka govt wins majority as opposition MPs defect' 2007, *Reuters*, 28 January. (FACTIVA)
3. 'Rebels 2007: The fallout of political pole-vaulting' 2007, *Lanka Page*, 7 February. (<http://lankapage.wordpress.com/2007/02/07/rebels-2007-the-fallout-of-political-pole-vaulting/> – Accessed 28 March 2007)
4. 'Who will fare well?' 2007, *The Nation*, 28 January. (<http://www.nation.lk/2007/01/28/inter.htm> – Accessed 28 March 2007)
5. 'Election 2004: Seats – Parliament Composition' (undated), Sri Lanka Election Commission. (<http://archive.srilankanelections.com/seatsofar.htm> – Accessed 27 March 2007)
6. 'Tissa Attanayake vows disciplinary actions against UNP dissidents who joined Sri Lanka's ruling party led by Mahinda Rajapaksa' 2007, *Asian Tribune*, 29 January. (<http://www.asiantribune.com/index.php?q=node/4328> – Accessed 27 March 2007)

7. 'View Graphical Representation: General Elections 2004' (undated), Sri Lanka Election Commission. (<http://archive.srilankanelections.com/allcumu2004.htm> – Accessed 27 March 2007)
8. UK Home Office 2005, *Sri Lanka Country Assessment*, September – 'Political Organizations' – Annex B – 'United National Party (UNP)'.
9. 'UNP (United National Party)' 2007, *Sri Lankan News & Discussions*. (<http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/profiles/unp.jsp> – Accessed 28 March 2007)
10. 'UNP to re-appoint the provincial organizers' 2006, *The Truth*, 12 July. (http://www.lankatruth.com/full_story/2006/july/12/20060712_8.htm – Accessed 28 March 2007)
11. 'News Headlines: January 1999' 1999, Inform Sri Lanka Information Monitor, pp.1-5, March. (CISNET Sri Lanka CX34299)
12. 'Media Communiqué on Election-related Violence – Local Government Elections – May 2006' 2006, Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV), 20 May http://www.cpalanka.org/cmev_20th_May_2006_2nd_Release.html – Accessed 28 March 2007).